

GreySky

An easier way?

The Four Product Bs

An easier way?

Easier buying = easier selling!

Everyone (nearly) in the UK buys their groceries from a supermarket. OK, that's partly because you can get everything in your weekly shop in one place and wheel the trolley straight to your car. But it's also because the actual buying part is easy. You don't have to know the right name for the cut of meat you want, or what weight of vegetables. Shopping in a supermarket isn't a test – you just wander through the aisles and pick whatever you want.



The Four Product Bs

Productisation is making your products and services simple to buy – as easy as picking a box from a shelf.

Buyer : Who is the *actual* customer?

Benefit : What do they *really* want.

Box : Everything they *need*?

Bargain : Everything they *want!*

The **Four Bs** make your products and services easy to buy – and the supermarkets have proved, that really does mean easy to sell!

Buyer

Do you know who I am?

Do you really know your customers? Like so many things, productisation starts with the customer, and that can be difficult. If your products and services are complicated, your customers might hide the fact that they don't understand.

If your customers are businesses, will the buyer be the CEO, the IT Manager, the Operations Director? Will they buy for their own use or for the whole company? What will happen to them if they make a bad choice?

If your customers are consumers, are they buying for themselves or the whole family? When do they buy? Why?

Create an image of a typical customer – or probably a range of key customers for your different products and services.

What do they know?

Perhaps the most important thing you need to know, is *what do they know?* If what you say matches what they know, they will trust you. From here you can help them choose the right product for their needs. Can you help them to know more?

The issue of knowledge is particularly important if the *buyer* is not the *user*. You might need to help the user communicate to the buyer what is important.



Benefit

What do they REALLY want?

Sell benefits, not features is well known – but it's not as simple as it sounds. The same product can have many different benefits to different people – even to the same person on different days.

A man might go and buy exactly the same white shirt on three different Wednesdays, but for three completely different reasons...



- He might simply want to get out of the office for a while and spend a pleasant few moments buying something that will always come in handy.
- He might have a career changing meeting in half an hour – and have spilt coffee down his shirt.
- He might want to buy a shirt to wear at his daughter's wedding.

In each case, the benefit is completely different – and very little to do with the shirt. Understanding the benefit your customer is trying to buy is vital in finding the right product and right approach.

Box

Inside the box thinking!

One of the big challenges in developing products is deciding *what to put in the box*. Include too much and the product seems expensive. Leave out something vital and the customer isn't happy.

Perhaps that's obvious. But even with the obvious there are problems. For something as simple as flat-packed furniture, how many times is there vital piece missing?



The decision of what to include has a big impact on the impression of *quality* or *value* you give. When you buy a Dell printer you need to buy the USB cable separately – a nice touch in demonstrating *value* but could be *really* annoying.

Small, medium or large?

Of course, there's no such thing as a *right answer* in product design. But simple choices help the customer find the right version for them. Car manufacturers use different product variants to tailor basic products to different markets. They keep the same variant names throughout the range to maintain the product values across their different cars – and simplify the buying decision as customers “trade up” over time.

There is nearly always a “mid-range” product. The *Goldilocks Principle* means it's usually the most popular choice – and should also be the highest profit margin product.

Bargain

Do you want fries with that?

Of course, the basic product is just the start. The basic product choice helps you understand what your customer is looking for; but what does it say about what they really want? There is always the opportunity to increase the sale – and show you really understand what they are really looking for. The McDonald's **do you want fries with that** might annoy some people, but it *is* an effective way of letting the customer think if they want something extra to complete their meal.



The same principle applies to virtually every product – perhaps with a little more thought about what the product says they might want. Amazon's **perfect partner** was probably one of the most sophisticated approaches – choose one CD and Amazon would suggest another you might like with a **buy now button** for the pair. But it can be simpler than you might think.



If a customer buys an expensive laptop, what are they *really* trying to buy? It might be **reliability** – in which case what about a maintenance contract and online backup service – perhaps even a replicated laptop kept offsite and available at a moment's notice? Alternatively it might be **prestige** – an exclusive leather case and some top of the range software?

Added value

A really effective product should stand in its own right – with nothing else needed. But it also provides a perfect platform to add personal touches to give each customer their own sense of value.

Conclusion

So what..?

Buyer

Who will buy the product? Make sure *they* can understand what you are selling.

Benefit

What does the customer *really* want? What does their choice of product say about them?

Box

Include exactly the right functions and features to ensure the user has everything they need.
Different variants can help people to choose.

Bargain

Added extras that give greater personal value to each customer.

